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Main Features of Polygraph Examiners Training

Основные характеристики программы подготовки специалистов-полиграфологов

Key words: polygraph training, polygraph in Russia

The qualification of polygraph examiners is one of the most important factors that influence the efficiency of polygraph usage in Russia and all over the world.

Regardless of apparent simplicity of principles, underlying polygraph testing, its effective use is possible only by professionally trained specialists with sufficient practical experience as polygraph examiners. The quality, the accuracy and the reliability of the results of polygraph examinations directly depend not only on their conscientiousness and decency, but on the theoretical and practical skills they have obtained in the course of professional training.

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The education of polygraph examiners requires detailed study of the whole range of modern polygraph techniques, methods of countermeasure detection, psychology and physiology basics, application of adequate psycho-technologies during communication with an examinee, accumulation of practical experience and obviously some personality traits of a person being trained such as interpersonal communication skills, mental flexibility and adaptivity etc.

Prior to the nineties of the last century this profession was actually absent in Russia, which is why there were no system of training of this kind of specialists. Polygraph examiners existed only in special agencies.

Unfortunately, today because of the increasing demand for this profession, it has been appeared many initiative self-educated persons that do not manage methodological, legal, professional and ethical aspects of the polygraph testing well enough.

Many problems are often encountered during polygraph examinations by Russian polygraph examiners who graduated from numerous polygraph schools existing now in this country. First, they are related to the supply of insufficient amount or long-outdated learning material to polygraph trainees. This happens predominantly because the lecturers often do not possess the necessary professional skills but hold themselves out as super professionals, thereby disorienting their students.

Today our National School for Lie Detection (NSLD) is well-equipped and teaches its students such modern techniques as:

- Single-issue (single-facet and multi-facet) techniques, developed in the Utah university, USA;

- Test of actual awareness, originally proposed by D. Lykken;
- Multiple (ART) and single issue (DLST) screening tests etc.

All these techniques are described in details in a special 4 volumes training manual “Modern technologies of polygraph practice” (Authors: Pelenitsyn A.B. and Soshnikov A.P., Moscow, 2015) published especially for the students of NSLD.

According to the results of the Meta-analysis, fulfilled in the USA, all the techniques included in this manual demonstrated the highest accuracy, reliability and efficiency compared to many other methods used by polygraph examiners.

The process of polygraph examiners training in NSLD, finished afterwards with receiving the diplomas, consists of 3 stages:

- Basic training – 4 weeks, full-time stage;
- Training at a workplace – external stage;
- Final training – 3 weeks, full-time stage.

The external stage, as a rule, lasts approximately for 2 months. This period allows our students to reinforce their skills as future polygraph examiners, practicing at their own working places, and to prepare their graduation diplomas that are defended during the qualification examination.

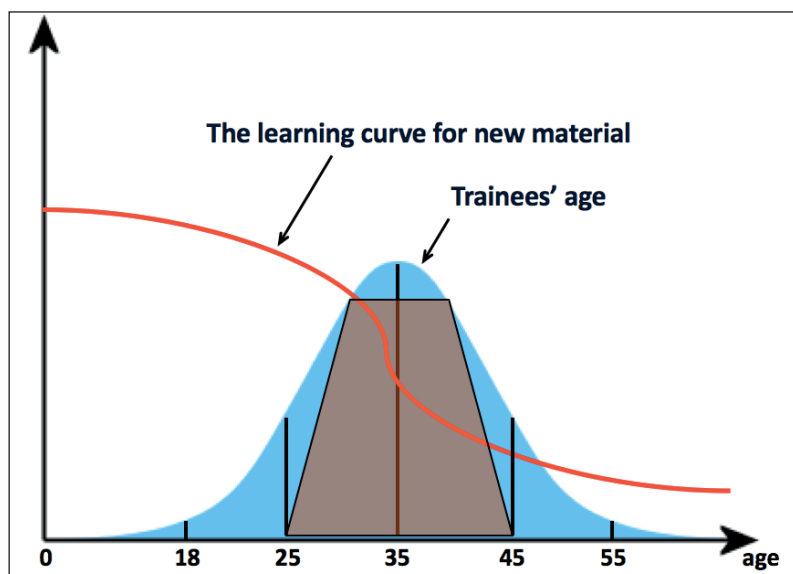


The total volume of the program of polygraph examiners' training in NSLD amounts to 514 academic hours.

Unfortunately, besides the stated subjective reasons, the quality of polygraph examiner training is influenced by a range of external objective factors, related to the methodical peculiarities of the training process. Let's consider them in more details:

1. The problem of age of the trainees.

By the generally accepted requirements a polygraph examiner is a specialist with higher education and at the age not younger than 25. In fact, as a rule, most of people that decide to practice in the field of polygraph are aged from 30 to 40 and older and have big life experience and long-term skills of communication with people. Often they are former military people, those who left military service and wish to devote themselves to a new type of activity. At this age the process of learning new training material is significantly slower. Moreover, the cognitive process itself arouses emotional tension in students. To overcome this problem, it is recommended, firstly, to transfer new knowledge to trainees in the maximum understandable form and, secondly, to conduct constant, day by day control of the acquired knowledge through the whole training process. We conduct this type of control, for example, in the form of every day written testing (5–10 minutes) of the recently learnt material. On the one side, it stimulates the future polygraph examiners to repeat steadily the lecture material, and, on the other side, it helps to recollect repeatedly the learnt material that encourages memory improvement and quick learning of new knowledge.



2. Tactical-methodological problem.

The essence of this problem is that learning of the theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of polygraph should take place simultaneously, complementing one another in a natural way. During the training, every stage of theoretical material delivery should be accompanied by its practical implementation and acquisition of primary skills to use the just learned material. In practice, this methodology results in conducting practical work on the same day for the reinforcement of theoretical knowledge, gained during the preceding lectures. This structure of teaching process allows reinforcing in the memory the working skills of a polygraph examiner soundly and for a long period of time.

3. The problem of learning of different polygraph techniques.

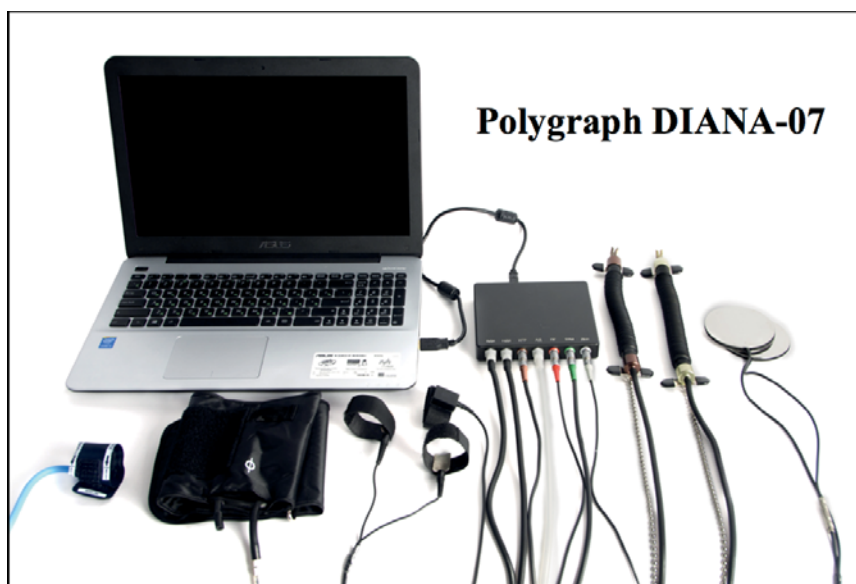
To run polygraph examinations of high quality, the polygraph examiner must know and operate professionally all testing techniques taught in our School to the full extent. It is necessary to know the real possibilities of each technique, their step-by-step implementation, advantages and disadvantages and recommended areas of their application. It is very important to distribute all the techniques within the training program in such a way that makes their learning maximum effective. We consider as correct and efficient the teaching techniques in the following sequence:

- ***At the stage of basic training*** the following areas are gradually studied: the history and scientific principles of the polygraph profession, basics of psychology and physiology, the single-issue single-facet test, the test of actual awareness, and the multiple-issues screening test.
- ***At the final stage*** the following areas are gradually studied: the single-issue multi-facet test, the single-issue screening test, methods of countermeasure detection, the basics of polygraph examinations, and several additional topics, related to the professional activity of a polygraph examiner.

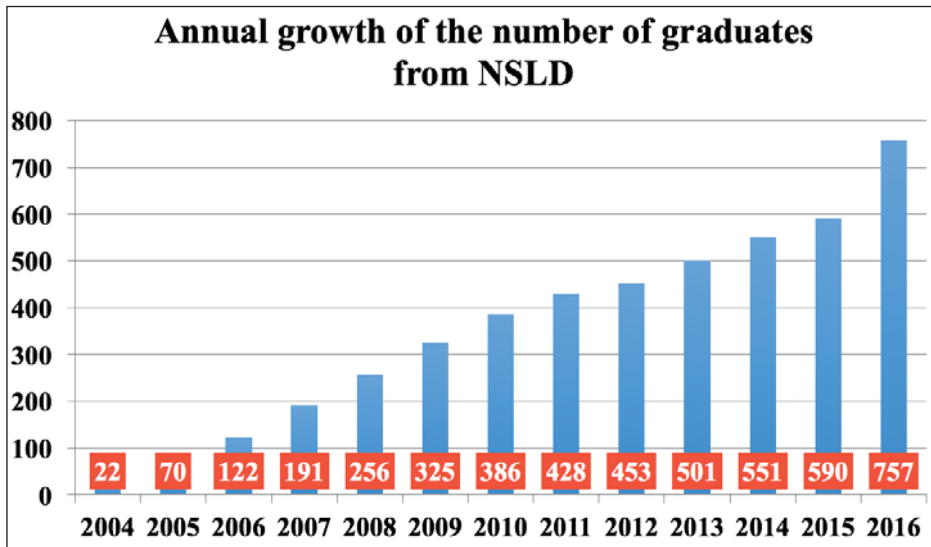
When looking carefully at the training program, the following question immediately arises: “Why are the specified topics not listed in the order of the increasing complexity for their learning by the students, but vice versa, the most difficult methods are studied at first?”. According to the traditionally accepted logics of the study of new material «from the easiest to the most difficult» it is evident that they should be included in the training program in this order. Unfortunately, in this case it appears not quite right. The matter is that a specialist, who consider and calls himself a polygraph examiner and knows at least one method from the listed above, can already take on to resolve most of practical tasks. In this case, the quality of fulfillment of these tasks decreases significantly. Therefore, while offering the methods for studying in the stated sequence we ensure their uniform learning in the sufficient volume.

In the course of basic and final training of polygraph examiners, for the consolidation of the obtained primary skills for practical work, it is mandatory to conduct role games, during which the process of the real testing is imitated for the solution of different specific task.

This can be either the task of human resources evaluation, or any single-issue investigation. Every student consequently plays the role of an examinee or conducts the testing as a polygraph examiner. It is necessary for the future polygraph examiner to play the role of an examinee in order to feel the experience of those people with whom he/she will work in the near future. The results of this game naturally sum up the obtained knowledge and serve as a so-called exam intended to check the efficiency of the practical part of studies.



All practical trainings in NSDL are run using Russian polygraphs DIANA-07. At present these instruments are the most sophisticated, have extended functionality, including proprietary decision making algorithm ChanceCalc®, and can be used to solve practically all the tasks in the field of credibility assessment.



Taking into account the above-mentioned recommendations, the training of polygraph examiners has been conducted in NSDL since 2004. During this period, we prepared more than 700 specialists, the experience of which, their professional knowledge, skills and practical performance provide clear evidence of the correctness of the chosen learning method.